

**West Knoydart Deer Management group**  
**Minutes of meeting held at Inverie village hall**  
**Tuesday 26th November 2013 11.15 am**

**Present:** Iain Biggart, Jim Brown, Cathy Mayne, Lester Standen, Iain Wilson, Davie Newton (chair), Grant Holroyd until 12.00.

1. **Apologies:** Jamie Lindsey, Eric Delwart, Rick Rhode, Lewis Pate, Tommy McManmon, Graeme Taylor
2. **Minutes of meeting** held on 5<sup>th</sup> August were agreed

**3. Review of action points**

Action point	Who by	Progress
Develop count and cull database	DN	On agenda
Circulate objective priority weightings background	JB	Done
Set meeting dates for the year in advance.	All	On agenda
Provide examples of Deer Management Plans	GT	Done
Bring monitoring maps, etc to next meeting	LS/LP/IB	On agenda
Provide habitat monitoring summary sheets to compile data	GT	Done
Natural Mortality recording information	LP	Done – on agenda
Information and invitation of membership to Doug Hawthorn	NT	No contact from NT
Provide information on aspirational and actual densities	JB	Done – on agenda

**4. Habitat monitoring 2013**

JB reported on KF survey results, which had shown for blanket bog habitat, 50% light browsing pressure, 30% moderate and 20% heavy and for dwarf shrub heath habitat 57% light browsing pressure, 37% moderate and 7% heavy. Woodland surveys (circular seedling plots) were continued as previously. KFT are planning to do a full survey to map remnant woodland around the west coast, and will then set up additional plots to better monitor there. The surveys will be done in May next year, when assessment of browsing should be easier before the new growth comes on. LS had also carried out monitoring on JMT, but Kilchoan had not found time to expand on the initial survey work last year. IW said he was not currently planning any at Inverguserein.

**5. Stag cull reports and hind cull progress to date**

See summary sheet for totals.

KF had completed stag cull on target, including Fank Burn and Airor compensatory culls. Also a few beasts from woodland areas and some goats. Stags although light early in season had average weight of 14st, with heaviest at 19st, and average age of 11. There had been a lot of

old stags on the ground. Hinds progressing to plan, with animals in reasonable condition and high calving rate again evident.

Kilchoan reported also being on target, with average age of 10yrs, average weight 14st 04lbs and heaviest 18st 06lbs. Hind cull target has been reduced from 150 to 130 + calves, due to worries of possible high winter mortality. Hind population target has also been increased from 500 to 600. So far hinds are looking ok, with a few small calves but nothing unusual. Inverguserein had taken 8 stags with average age 9.5 yrs and average weight 14st 10lbs. Planning for about 10 to 12 hinds. Iain W. pointed out that lambing had been very poor with average weights 2 to 3 kg lighter than usual, due to the late spring which had also knocked back the stags so much.

## **6. Report from KDMG**

IB and CM reported from yesterday's meeting that most estates had a reasonably good stag season, though weather had been poor. However, Kingie had noticed a lack of stags with a pre-season count of less than 200, and the late rut had affected Camusrory's stag season with very few shot. Glen Dessary are still feeding stags. Barisdale have a long term forest plan in place for the SSSI, and have now been culling more adjacent to JMT.

The KDMG DMP is to be updated and put into action.

Recognition was given to WKDMG progress and good communication.

## **7. Natural Mortality Recording**

JB showed the identification and record sheets produced by LP. It was agreed that the recording should be taken on as a group rather than just KF, and that Identification should just concentrate on Red as it would be unlikely for people to come across any Roe mortalities.

## **8. Historical Group Data Records**

DN explained the spreadsheets, which are very informative. There are quite a few gaps in data where averages have been used so everyone is encouraged to add in where possible to get the most accurate picture possible. Some headlines noted were:

- Helicopter count numbers (1996) significantly higher than any foot counts.
- For the 'Old Knoydart Estate', overall population has shown very little change between 1972 (3278) and 2013 (3149), though the population distribution over the area has changed.
- It appears that a sustainable sporting population of 13 to 15 deer per 100ha can be best maintained by a 13 to 15 % annual cull.

It was thought it might be useful to add in average weights to the data records.

DN to circulate to full group mailing list for comment.

## **9. Deer Management Plan Development**

### Objectives Spreadsheet

Some members still to complete. There was some discussion on the weightings by ownership, but it was pointed out that all members had agreed on the top 20 objectives, so wouldn't be much affected by changing weightings. The top 20 were thought to be a good representation of the groups priorities overall. JB to finish compiling and then have as an appendix to the DMP.

### DMP

It was decided to come up with a statement of purpose to open the plan with. JB to draft then circulate for comment. Also have a small informal meeting to begin drafting a plan based on the JMT template (DN to organise).

### Maps

The density map needs count basis adding, ie dates, weather conditions, etc.

A seasonal range map for hinds/stags could be useful. There was a discussion on the density zoning doodles map. Some thought it had potential and others thought it unrealistic.

Kilchoan would prefer to have a target density for the group as a whole. CM thought it might be possible to have this as an overall group target, then also with a more graded density aspiration as a second layer. IB raised the point made by ED in his email, that he thought the acreage was too small for a zoned approach to work. However, it was accepted that population density is already graded across the group to some extent. IB said that JMT deer management had so far not had a negative impact on Kilchoan estate's deer management, but was not in favour of trying to reduce their hind density on the neighbouring area of ground around Coire a Phuill. JB is to look at allocating culls to ground area as a proportion of the group total, to see if it could be feasible.

## **10. Deer Count**

Plan is to again try to count late Feb or early March, before IB heads off.

### **2014 meeting dates (proposed)**

- February 26<sup>th</sup>
- May 28<sup>th</sup>
- July 23<sup>rd</sup>
- November 19<sup>th</sup>

### Action Points

Information and invitation of membership to Doug Hawthorn	NT
Carry out habitat monitoring, May 2014	All
Adjust natural mortality recording to only Red deer and on behalf of WKDMG rather than just KF.	LP
Circulate data records and continue to add to/amend as necessary	DN
Complete objectives scoring	All
Finish compiling objectives spreadsheet and append to DMP	JB
Draft statement of DMP purpose and circulate	JB
Informal meeting to draft DMP	DN
Add count detail to density map	JB
Draft map of seasonal (summer/winter) stag/hind ranges	JB
Look at feasibility of allocating culls by area	JB
Deer Count	JB/IB/IW/LS
Confirm meeting dates	JB/GT